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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 000007

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN LEADER GETS UAE HELP FOR ELECTIONS

Classified By: CDA Martin R. Quinn, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) During his tour of the Gulf countries, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas met January 1 with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ). The encounter, which received front-page coverage in both the Arabic and English press, centered on Palestinian preparations for legislative elections set for January 25. Abbas apparently secured a pledge of UAE financial assistance for the elections, according to Ibrahim al-Abed, senior media advisor to Information Minister Sheikh Abdullah. "I had heard that he (Abbas) was coming here looking for money," al-Abed told Pol Chief. Judging from Abbas' press statements, he received the support requested. "The UAE officials, as usual, have met all our demands, without delving into details," Abbas told the government's official news agency.

2. (U) The Abbas-MbZ meeting also reportedly covered the prospects for peace in the Middle East, with MbZ reiterating the UAE's "unequivocal support" for the Palestinians. MbZ also stressed the importance of working to activate the roadmap. Abbas thanked the UAE for its support to the Palestinians, including its financing of the Sheikh Khalifa City, a residential apartment complex in the Gaza Strip. The Arabic "al-Ittihad" quoted Abbas as saying that the reconciliation process must move forward "despite Israel's many violations." Abbas said it was "to our benefit that the reconciliation be ongoing so that we can build our country and revive business activities and let things return to the way they were." He also said that "those who talk about violating the reconciliation process are very wrong." As he left Abu Dhabi for Doha January 2, Abbas issued a statement emphasizing that Israel's "fait accompli policy" on building settlements "on our occupied lands is not acceptable."

3. (C) Comment: We are inquiring about the amount the UAE may have pledged for the Palestinian elections. While in Abu Dhabi, Abbas met over lunch with Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed, met in the evening with MbZ and other dignitaries, then concluded the day with dinner hosted by Information Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, who has held the Palestine portfolio in recent years and who traveled to Gaza last October to lay the foundation stone for the Sheikh Khalifa City project.

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